

**UNITED WE STAND AGAINST MILITARY COUPS AND
TENURE ELONGATIONS: STEERING WEST AFRICA
TOWARDS STABILITY AND DEMOCRACY**

A Speech Delivered by Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin
(MP), Deputy Majority Leader of Ghana's Parliament, and
Leader of Ghana's Delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament, at
the University of Education, Winneba, at the Opening
Ceremony of the High-Level Interactive Seminar and the
Extraordinary Session of the Economic Community of West
African States (ECOWAS) Parliament on September 29, 2023

- ***Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo,
President of the Republic of Ghana,***
- *Honourable Speaker Tunis of the ECOWAS Parliament,*
- *His Majesty Neenyi Ghartey VII, the Paramount Chief of
Effutu,*
- *President of ECOWAS Commission*
- *Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.*
- *Distinguished Colleagues and Members of the ECOWAS
Parliament,*
- *Esteemed Guests and Experts,*
- *Respected Nananom,*
- *Vigilant members of the media fraternity,*
- *Vibrant students of the University of Winneba, and the
proud citizens of Effutu*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen...*

1. Good Morning!

2. Once again, under the nurturing embrace of the African sky, we reconvene here in the vibrant heart of Effutu. It feels as if the sands and seas of Winneba, a stronghold

of unity and resilience, have awaited our return. In this place where our historical roots intertwine with our fervent aspirations for a prosperous future, we stand united, ready to foster peace, solidarity, and an unyielding drive towards unlimited potential.

3. Colleague Members of the Ecowas Parliament, it is with a sense of familiarity and renewed commitment that we gather here for the second time in two years, a testament to Winneba's enduring spirit of collaboration and progress. As we stroll through its historic streets, we can feel the whispers of the past beckoning us to continue the journey we embarked upon, a journey towards a future illuminated by the steadfast flame of democracy, justice, and freedom.

4. We gather once more with a pressing agenda that cannot be understated. The theme of our discourse, "The Challenges of Tenure Elongation and Unconstitutional Regime Change in West Africa – The Critical Role of the ECOWAS Parliament", is not just a call for reflection, but a clarion call for action. We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history where the pillars of democracy are

being challenged and shaken, but we must stand resolute.

5. We cannot overlook the ripple effects of the global crises that have besieged us. The COVID-19 pandemic, followed closely by the tragic events unraveling in Ukraine and Russia, have brought untold hardships, thrusting millions into the depths of poverty, squalor, and immense suffering. Citizens across West Africa, and indeed Africa, have not been spared from this global ordeal, bearing the brunt with profound grace and resilience. For example, according to the World Food Program, the number of hungry people in Central and West Africa could rise to 48 million this year alone.

6. Yet, it is with a heavy heart that we acknowledge another glaring crisis that tears at the fabric of our communities - the barbaric onslaught from jihadists and terrorists. With their crude weapons of horror, they continue to bring death and despair to many parts of West Africa. But we must staunchly assert that these activities should in no way provide a justification for military coups to overthrow democratically elected regimes. We must insist,

fervently, that the answer to these acts of terror lies within our democratic institutions, standing as bastions of hope and fortitude amidst the turmoil.

7. We stand at a juncture where the road we choose will dictate the future of our great region. The recent resurgence of military coups threatens to drag us back to an era we have fought tirelessly to transcend. We must firmly CONDEMN the coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Chad, and Gabon, along with the hostilities in Sudan. These actions are a betrayal of the democratic principles we hold dear, and we demand a swift return to constitutional rule. We must affirm, unequivocally, that regression is not the solution. Our golden age lies ahead of us, not in the shadows of the 1960s to 1980s.

8. It is under the shade of democracy that we can cultivate the progress we aspire to. It is here that we can construct the schools that will nurture the minds of our future leaders. It is here that we can build modern hospitals to heal our people and foster technology to propel Africa into an era of supreme industrialization in the wake of the AfCFTA.

Together, we can construct robust and resilient economies that will position Africa as a formidable competitor on the global stage.

9. As we gather here today, I cannot help but feel a profound kinship with the great son of Ghana, Kofi Annan, of blessed memory, who once reminded us that though there is no one model of democracy, it is essential that the principles of democracy, human rights and freedoms are upheld universally.
10. Taking inspiration from his wise words, we find ourselves with a renewed commitment to enhance our democratic systems, making them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of every citizen, regardless of where they find themselves on the broad spectrum of society.
11. Indeed, no form of governance has ever been perfect, yet history has proven time and again that democracy stands as the best option for nations seeking development in peace and harmony. Even in its imperfections, it carries within its structures the capacity to rise above the ills that afflict it, fostering environments where innovation, justice, and freedom thrive. It is

incumbent upon us, the custodians of this sacred trust, to continually refine and enhance these structures, ensuring that they remain resilient in the face of the ever-changing challenges that our societies encounter.

12. Admittedly, our current global landscape showcases a bevy of leaders who have sought to unlawfully modify their constitutions to perpetuate their hold on power. This is a grave affront to the principles of democracy, which enshrine the fundamental rights of citizens to choose their leaders and to live under a government that is held accountable for its actions. As we traverse this difficult period, we must remain vigilant, standing firm against the erosion of these principles and fighting to protect the sanctity of our democratic processes.

13. Now, more than ever, we are called upon to be stalwarts of justice, champions of the values that define democratic governance. Our unity must be our shield, protecting the flames of democracy and freedom from being extinguished by the icy winds of despotism and tyranny.

14. We find ourselves at a critical juncture, a time when our decisions and actions will shape the trajectory of our

region for generations to come. We cannot afford to falter or to allow the resurgence of military coups and other forms of unconstitutional changes of government. The reason is that those actions undermine the progress we have fought so hard to achieve.

15. As President George W. Bush Jnr. once said, ***"the human heart desires the same good things, everywhere on Earth."*** Together, we can safeguard our region's boundless potential. Here in Effutu, we must be resolute, standing shoulder to shoulder to protect and nurture the values of freedom, dignity, and the rule of law.

16. Inspired by those who walked these beautiful African lands before us, we must acknowledge the tests our values continue to face. Yet, they must remain unbroken, urging us forward towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

17. As sons and daughters of this vibrant land, we hold within us the power to craft a future that embodies the values we hold dear. A future where every individual can live a life marked by dignity, where our children can aspire to achieve their fullest potential, and where the

harmonious symphony of our diverse cultures and histories create a fabric of unparalleled beauty and richness.

18. Let us stand united, ready to foster and protect the sacred flames of democracy and freedom, guided by the enduring spirit of collaboration, resilience, and progress that have defined our journey thus far. In all our discussions here in Winneba, let us pledge to stand firm in our collective endeavor to nurture a West Africa where the harmony of its nations is preserved and the aspirations of its peoples realized. Our resolve should mirror the steadfastness of the ancient baobab trees across Ghana, deeply rooted in the fertile soils of unity, democracy, and human dignity.

19. Together, under the gentle gaze of the African sun, let's pen a new chapter in our history; a chapter of unity, resilience, and progress. We shall forge a future where the echoing calls of democracy reverberate across the lands, ushering in a new era of hope and prosperity for all.

20. And, when our task here in Effutu is done, let us carry the vibrant spirit of Winneba with us, as we return to our

respective nations in 10 days' time, fortified with the conviction that together, we shall overcome all challenges and triumph as one united, resilient, and prosperous West African community.

21. Your Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, Right Hon Speaker Tunis, Nananom, Colleague Honourable Members and Staff of the ECOWAS Parliament, Distinguished Guests and Experts here with us in Winneba... **Once again, WELCOME TO WINNEBA, THE CAPITAL OF EFFUTU, the land of proud deer hunters.** Peace be with you throughout your stay here with us in Winneba.

22. God Bless ECOWAS! God Bless our respective nations and their parliaments! Thank you! *Merci!*
Obrigado!